

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants respond herein to the Office Action issued February 13, 2008.

Claims 1-12 were rejected in the Office Action. In response to the rejection, Applicants amend Claims 1-3 and 9-12 and respectfully request a reconsideration of the rejection. Claims 1-12 remain in this Application after the present Amendment.

Claims 1-8, 10 and 11 were rejected in the Office Action under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,346,333 to Maloberti et al ("Maloberti") in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,117,692 to Oberg ("Oberg") and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,540,440 to Beaujean ("Beaujean"). Claim 9 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maloberti in view of Oberg and Beaujean and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,594,871 to Boer ("Boer"). Claim 12 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maloberti in view of Oberg.

Claim 1 recites an installation for manufacturing a wound **rigid** tubular pipe. The installation includes an assembly unit 12 assembling a plurality of rigid tubes 24 into tube lengths 26 and then assembling the tube lengths into a rigid tubular pipe. (See, e.g. Figs. 1 and 2). The installation also includes a first float 10 with an intermediate winding and deforming apparatus 11 mounted thereon. The intermediate winding and deforming apparatus 11 plastically deforms and winds the rigid tubular pipes, thus forming the wound rigid tubular pipe 28. Finally, the installation also includes a storage reel 40 (shown in Fig. 5) positioned on the laying ship. The rigid tubular pipe 28 is wound onto the storage reel 40 after being plastically deformed by the intermediate winding and deforming apparatus 11.

Under MPEP §2141.01(a), to rely on a reference under 35 U.S.C. §103, the reference must be analogous prior art. However, Maloberti describes a process for laying flexible conduits and not rigid conduits. As described in the present application (see, e.g., page 1, lines 13-31), in the field of oil prospecting, a clear distinction is made between flexible pipes and rigid pipes. According to American Petroleum Institute Recommended Practice 17B (4.3.1.2):

"A flexible pipe generally combines low bending stiffness with high axial tensile stiffness, which is achieved by a composite pipe wall construction. The two basic components are helical armouring layers and polymer sealing layers, which allow

a much smaller radius of curvature than for a steel pipe with the same pressure capacity."

Further, flexible pipes have a minimum bend radius to which they can be bent without damage (often known as MBR for minimum bending radius). This minimum bend radius of flexible pipes is relatively small (for example, a few meters) by comparison with rigid pipes, whose minimum radius of curvature without plastic deformation is relatively large (for example, several tens of meters).

Accordingly, Maloberti which discloses a process and apparatus for laying flexible tubular conduits can not be considered an analogous prior art.

Oberg discloses a method and system for producing and laying pipelines on the sea bottom, where the pipe is plastically deformed and wound onto a storage reel. However, as the Examiner correctly pointed out in the Office Action, Oberg does not disclose or suggest having the reel on the laying ship and the intermediate deforming apparatus on the float.

Finally, Beaujean does not remedy the above deficiency of Oberg because it discloses a method and an installation for storing an elongated tube which does not use any reel (see Beaujean, col.2, line 16).

Accordingly, none of the cited references disclose an installation where a rigid tubular pipe is first plastically deformed and wound onto an intermediate winding apparatus, then unwound, deformed elastically and rewound onto a storage reel of a laying ship. This transfer is performed without the need to straighten the rigid tubular pipe prior to rewinding it onto the laying boat storage reel. Thus, as the pipe is being transferred from the intermediate storage reel to the storage and laying reel, the pipe does not undergo any straightening, i.e., any plastic deformation in the direction opposite to the plastic deformation conferred upon the pipe when it was wound onto the intermediate storage reel.

Based on the above, it is clear that a person of ordinary skill in the art would not have combined teachings of the cited references in the manner suggested by the Examiner. Therefore, Claim 1 is allowable over the prior art of record. Moreover, Claims 2-11, which depend from Claim 1, are also allowable at least for the same reasons as Claim 1 and, further on their own merits. Finally, Claim 12 recites limitations similar to the discussed limitations of Claim 1.

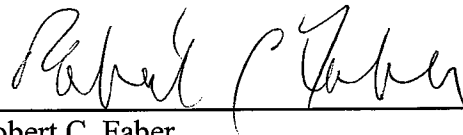
Specifically, Claim 12 recites steps of plastically deforming and then winding the rigid tubular pipe onto the first float and transferring the wound rigid tubular pipe from the first float to the storage reel positioned on the laying ship by rewinding the rigid tubular pipe onto the storage reel after the rigid tubular pipe was subjected to plastic deformation. As discussed above, these steps are not disclosed in the prior art of record.

Favorable reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of Claims 1-12 pending in the Application is respectfully requested.

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